

# Serving in Sudan

OCTOBER, 2003

## Hundreds Attend New School

Access to education is something many of us take for granted. Basic education is available, regardless of race, creed or economic stature in our culture. In contrast, education is rarely available to everyone in a Muslim country, where school is typically taught in a mosque and intended for Muslims, primarily boys. The people in Blue Nile and Eastern Upper Nile, south Sudan have not had access to basic education under the Muslim government in Sudan, since much of this region is not Muslim.

Over the past year, the people in one village have worked with Servant's Heart to create a school for over 250 children in first and second grade. Some first graders are over 15 years old — they have never been to school. Thanks to you, they are learning to read and write.

The school building was built cooperatively by local school parents in the style of their homes, called tukuls. There are three buildings and morning assembly is held in the courtyard before breaking into five classes, averaging 50 students. Each year another building will be built with local materials to house the next grade.

School is being taught in English, the new trade language in this area. Students come from five different tribes, speaking five distinct languages. Two latrines were dug by villagers to teach the children hygiene. A well was dug so students can drink clean water and each student was given a plastic cup when they registered for school. Teachers encourage students to drink water during the school day. Most of these children have never had a drink of clean water, so they don't drink enough water.

Through this school, children are being taught reading, writing, math, health and Bible. Approximately half are girls (see photo) and they attend school with the boys in the same class. Students walk up to 10 miles to school, which takes about four hours per day.



This school was started through the encouragement and direction of Servant's Heart, but most of the work has been done by the villagers. They built the classrooms, dug the well, built the latrines and identified the teachers. Experts donated time and skills to plan the school grounds, train the teachers and complete the well. Through your partnership, prayers and financial support, Servant's Heart has brought together the resources to provide a future for these children.

The ongoing commitment of one group in particular made this school a reality: Midland Christian School in Midland, TX. Midland Christian students, teachers, and parents have been supporting this school since the summer of 2002. Additional donations helped complete the infrastructure. We recently had the opportunity to share the successes of the new school with the Midland Christian students. Hundreds of students will learn to read this year and we hope some will create Bible translations into their languages, thanks to the dedication of these students.

This first school is so successful that it is attracting families from other villages so their children can attend this school. Won't you help us start schools in other villages? The people of another village have already built one school building and a teacher training center. But they need teachers trained and a good well. Two other nearby towns are ready to dig six new wells to prepare for schools in their towns. These three villages have over 1,600 students ready to attend school and 400 more are wait-listed. Teachers are identified.

Funds are needed to pay teachers a minimal salary and complete the infrastructure. Please consider donating to complete the wells, supply textbooks or train teachers. Or, for only \$60/year or \$5/month, you can sponsor a child to attend school.

## A Day in the Life of Chuol

He rises before dawn to help his mother tend the goats and get his brothers and sisters up and ready for school. He lives in the tropical jungle seven miles from the nearest village where Servant's Heart has a new school. After eating a small amount of boiled sorghum, he leaves in the early light to walk seven miles to school, walking for about two hours on paths that wind through the jungle over rolling hills. His bare feet sometimes get cut on the long, sharp grass, so he's careful to walk where he walked yesterday. He stays away from the tall grass where the cobras hide and where the lions have killed other boys. His name is Chuol (Chol).

He meets his new schoolmates in the courtyard outside the school buildings, smiling and shaking hands with everyone he meets, as is the custom. While he does not live close to the village, many of these children are from his tribe and other neighboring tribes, displaced by the war. It is unusual for so many tribes to be represented in one school, but he is honored to be making friends from other tribes.

He treats his exercise book with respect, making sure his pencil and book are ready for what he's going to learn today. He has a used plastic bag to keep his books and pencils dry and keep termites out. He's excited that he can go to school today—it is a privilege.

He lines up at morning assembly in a big semi-circle with his classmates, facing his teacher. He and

his classmates greet their teacher by singing "Good Morning, teacher". They practice three or four times before greeting the headmaster. Then they head into their classroom, where they recite the alphabet and basic English vocabulary, practicing the words the teacher writes on the small blackboard at the front. If it's not raining, they hold class under the tree where it's cooler.

After three hours, Chuol gets a break—recess! He meets other children in the courtyard to talk or play. Some kids play soccer or "football" with a ball donated from students in Washington, but he has already walked seven miles this



morning and has another seven to go home. He waits patiently in line to get a drink of clean water in his new plastic cup. When class reconvenes, he studies for two more hours, including the geography of Sudan and basic addition. Since food is scarce and there's no refrigeration, he must walk another two hours before eating a simple meal with his family.

Chuol considers himself fortunate. This is the first known school in this region of Eastern Upper Nile, south Sudan and he lives only seven miles away. He considers himself lucky that he lives on the same side of the river as the school. Some of his classmates must ford the river twice per day, which is not possible if the river is too deep. They often miss class if it is raining. Chuol is young and bright enough to plan to go to middle school, then on to secondary school, if it's available.

Chuol is also blessed because he has received pen pal letters from students in North America and has been able to write letters back. He hopes for more during the dry season. He has a message for Servant's Heart supporters. Chuol wants to say, "THANK YOU!" He is grateful to be attending school.

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## Teacher Training Pays Long-Term Benefits

Servant's Heart relies on a large number of professionals who donate their time and expertise to help us create programs that make a difference. In 2003, Richard "Dick" Stewart volunteered to help us train the first teachers in this area of south Sudan. A retired teacher trainer from Wycliffe, Dick risked his health and endured harsh conditions to train five teachers at our new school.

Headmaster Steven Gier said at the closing ceremonies, "We are pleased to teach the children here of things that people in this area have never heard. Servant's Heart has given us the authority and responsibility to educate the children here." Each teacher was given a cross necklace at the graduation ceremony to remind them and the children of their responsibility to God for caring for these children, regardless of their tribe. Like Dick, the teachers each feel they are contributing to the future of the people of Sudan through their work. **Thank you Dick!**



*Dick Stewart and teachers in training.*

## Student Survival Kits Provide Basics for Life and Learning

Servant's Heart is working to provide hundreds of **School Care Kits** for the children who will be attending new schools in neighboring villages. We are hoping to provide these kits as students register for school this winter.

The students in this area are from families that are recently displaced by the war and primarily from one tribe, the Mabaan. Many of their families traveled with nothing but the clothes on their backs, losing everything in the process. As a result, the students have little clothing and no supplies to support studying. This group is among the most destitute in the region (see photo below), but they are hard workers.

Through the school children, we are working on teaching individual responsibility and basic hygiene. In the Student Survival Kit, each student will be given a small number of things that he or she will be responsible to bring to school daily. The goal is to help the children study and teach them individual responsibility, learning to care for themselves and others. We have created a Student Care Kit to give each student the essentials for attending school and teaching them practical lessons in hygiene and sanitation.

A tee shirt and shorts are included to help the students be comfortable and provide clothing for all the students in the school. Many only have a ragged pair of pants. Because most of these children don't have shoes, their feet are often cut on the rocks and sharp grasses of the area and get infected. Many will walk more than two miles to and from school through the grasses and trees on a daily basis, when attending school. The sandals are made out of recycled tires and are more durable than "flip flops".

Soap is not commonly available in this area. The soap in the Kit will help them wash cuts that otherwise will get infected. They will be taught in school to use soap and water to reduce the spread of disease, which happens quickly here, since few of these children have been inoculated against any diseases and their parents don't have simple first aid supplies.



Students will be learning to read and write in English at school. A small book of Bible stories is included so they can learn to read as well as share the Bible with their families. Every kit will include a booklet for the children to learn about God as they learn to read. They will use these books in their Bible classes.

There are very few copies of the New Testament in the language of this area, so they must be cared for and shared between multiple families. The small Bible story books in the Student Care Kits will give the children practice in taking care of God's Word and protecting it from pervasive termites. We

area and are resilient to termites.

Our experience at the first school is that the drinking cups are very popular and practical. In addition to a drinking cup, the Student Survival Kit includes a one-liter water bottle to carry clean water to and from school. Since many of the children will walk to school in heat over 110 degrees Fahrenheit for more than six months of the year, the water bottle will allow them to carry clean water from the well at school to drink while walking.

The nylon bag is for the children to transport their books and protect them from the elements and insects. Our goal is to provide 800 student kits for to children from two villages. You can provide a **Student Care Kit** to a Mabaan child for \$40.

### School Kits

- ▶ School Tee Shirt
- ▶ School shorts
- ▶ Tire Sandals
- ▶ Soap
- ▶ Bible Stories
- ▶ Chalkboard
- ▶ Chalk
- ▶ Water bottle
- ▶ Drinking cup
- ▶ Waterproof Bag

hope and pray that some of these children will grow up to translate the rest of the Bible into their language.

The kit will include a personal-size chalkboard that students can use repeatedly. These small boards are set in plastic and tolerate the heavy rains and mud of this



*Student Survival Kits will support students in Eastern Upper Nile.*



## Mission Statement

As a responsible Christian organization, Servant's Heart seeks to honor God by serving the Christian church in restricted-access regions of the world with the goal of self-sufficiency. Servant's Heart addresses the community's immediate relief and developmental needs of spiritual growth, educational programs, public health and primary medical care, and agricultural and economic infrastructure.

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;  
I will counsel you and watch over you.  
Many are the woes of the wicked,  
but the Lord's unfailing love  
surrounds the man who trusts in him."

Psalm 32: 8,10 (NIV)

**We're on the Web!**  
[servantsheartrelief.org](http://servantsheartrelief.org)

## Servant's Heart

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Servant's Heart is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation, EIN #91-2138423.  
All donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Dear Friends:

Thank you for your continued partnership. Together we are making an incredible difference in this region in many respects. This month we celebrate five years of working in this region, starting in the UN "No Go" zone of Blue Nile in 1998 and moving southward in 2001 into Eastern Upper Nile. The successes are many and the challenges are great. Thank you for your on-going prayers and support.

This month we have focused on the progress we're making in Education because we have made substantial strides this year in establishing the first school in this area. We continue to support four medical clinics (Primary Healthcare facilities) and church leadership and facilitate the involvement of other organizations to bring physical aid into this area. We often do advocacy work to inform other organizations of the needs of this area and in return they have donated food, clothing, blankets, tools, seed and medicine. In some cases, we have worked closely with those organizations to distribute their donations because they know that we know the church and community leadership and will distribute them fairly. As a result, we have become a trusted partner for them in this area. At our offices in the Seattle area, volunteers pick up the mail and provide technical support, others stuff newsletters in Illinois that are edited in Arizona. The needs exceed our expertise and our resources. **We couldn't do it without you!**

May God richly bless you! *Dennis and Diane Bennett*

## Why Teach Schools in English?

During the British rule of Sudan (1896 to 1956), schools were taught in English and missionaries actively translated the Bible into local languages in some parts of Sudan, but many of the 400+ languages of southern Sudan were not touched. During this time, English became the trade language, so many people knew English sufficiently to trade between villages.

After Sudan declared itself to be an Islamic state in 1983, Arabic was imposed as the trade language. Today, all teaching in the Government-controlled territory is done in Arabic, girls are prohibited from attending school, and classes are only held at the local mosque. As a result, Arabic is eschewed as the language of the oppressor in southern Sudan and very few people speak or read Arabic in this region. The families want their daughters to be literate and help their families. They want English to be the trade language again.

Only two of the tribes we are working closely with have the entire Bible in their "heart language" or mother tongue. Due to the instability in the region, we are unable to place Westerners in remote villages for the years it would take to learn local languages and do translation work. However, the local people want to do the translations themselves! At a recent church gathering, villagers had a lively discussion with Dennis Bennett regarding their desire to learn English quickly so that translations of the Bible can be done expeditiously.

Through the evangelism of Servant's Heart, a number of people became Christians in 2002. The next day, these new Christians asked for the Bible to be translated into their language by the end of the year, even

though no one in the tribe could read or write. They are impatient to read God's Word in their heart language and understand Him more fully.

By teaching several tribes English simultaneously, Servant's Heart is teaching literacy skills that will facilitate Bible translation into several languages. Through the school, we are teaching Bible stories that need to be translated into several languages, not just one. We have consulted with other organizations that specialize in translation and they have found teaching the stories to be a very effective in facilitating translations. One organization is ready to train translators from these tribes once they have completed their schooling.

One organization translated the New Testament into Mabaan and is now working on the Old Testament. If we could supply more skilled Mabaan translators, the Old Testament could be completed in about half the time. Another language is in a similar situation.

The Koma language has just three books of the New Testament completed. These three books took almost ten years, but were completed just before the translator became ill and had to return to the U.S. in 1962. No translation work has been done since then and we have been able to locate only one frail old Koma man who remembers how to read and write the language. Students from this tribe have started attending our school with the express desire of completing this translation.

Please pray with us that the students of these languages would prepare quickly for translating the Bible so that others might learn about God.